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Owing to the inability of the proposed speaker to attend on Tuesday, 15th May, no meeting or dinner was held in May.

Two New Races of Weavers (Ploceidae) from Mozambique

by Mr. P. A. Clancey

Received 9th January, 1956

During the recent Durban Museum Expedition to Swaziland and southern Mozambique (August – September, 1955) particular attention was paid to the various weavers occurring in that sector of south-eastern Africa. A series of ♂♂ in breeding dress of the Spotted-backed Weaver *Ploceus spilonotus* Vigors collected by the expedition shows that the Mozambique populations differ markedly from those of the eastern Cape Province (topotypical) and Natal and appear to warrant segregation as a new race. The Thick-billed or Grosbeak Weaver *Amblyospiza albifrons* (Vigors) specimens collected by our party are referable to two quite distinct races: the nominate one which was taken just to the north of Lourenço Marques, and a much smaller and paler form which occurs to the northward. This latter race is apparently without a name and is formally described below.

I am grateful to Dr. A. A. da Rosa Pinto, Director of the Museu Dr. Alvaro de Castro, Lourenço Marques, for permitting me to study the extensive collection of Mozambique birds housed in that institution, and for so readily arranging the necessary permits and introductions which enabled the Durban Museum party to operate in Portuguese territory with the utmost facility. Thanks are also due to Dr. G. Rudebeck, Ornithologist of the Transvaal Museum, Pretoria, Mr. J. G. Williams, Ornithologist of the Coryndon Memorial Museum, Nairobi, and Miss M. Courtenay-Latimer, Director of the East London Museum, for the loan of essential comparative material.

Ploceus spilonotus dilutescens, subsp. nov.

Type: ♂ adult. Palmeira, north of Manhiça, Sul do Save, southern Mozambique. 26th September, 1955. Collected by P. A. Clancey. In the collection of the Durban Museum.

Diagnosis: Adult ♂ in breeding dress similar to *P. s. spilonotus* Vigors, 1831: Algoa Bay, Cape Province, but differs in having the yellow tips and

edges to the mantle, rump and wing feathers much lighter, less deep golden yellow. Black mask and throat more jet, less sooty, black. Ventrally much paler yellow, particularly on the abdomen, than in the nominate race. Using the colour nomenclature of C. and J. Villalobos, "Colour Atlas", Buenos Aires, 1947, the ventral colouration of *P. s. dilutescens* reads YYO-16–12°, that of the nominate race OY–15–12°. ♀ in breeding dress not at present known. ♂ and ♀ in non-breeding dress paler and clearer grey on mantle and whiter below, less dusky on the flanks, than in *P. s. spilonotus*. Similar in size.

Measurements of the Type: Wing (flattened) 91, culmen from base 23, tarsus 24, tail 57.5 mm.

Range: Southern Mozambique, Swaziland, eastern and northern Transvaal, and presumably the extreme north-eastern part of Zululand. The populations of this weaver which are found to the west of the stated range of *P. s. dilutescens* should also perhaps be placed here. The species is recorded in the literature as occurring to the north-west at Lake Ngami, as well as in Southern and Northern Rhodesia, but the evidence is in most instances highly unsatisfactory, and, indeed, there is no recent or properly authenticated record of its occurrence in Southern Rhodesia (R. H. N. Smithers *in litt.*). It is considered unlikely that this species of weaver occurs as a breeding bird in territory where the extremely closely allied (if not conspecific) *Ploceus nigriceps* (Layard) is to be found.

Material: Breeding ♂♂: *P. s. dilutescens*, 14 (southern Mozambique 8; Swaziland 2; eastern and northern Transvaal 4). *P. s. spilonotus*, 16 (eastern Cape Province 4; Natal 12). ♀♀ and non-breeding ♂♂ and ♀♀ of both races, 25.

Remarks: The discovery of this new form in southern Mozambique is interesting in that it has revealed the existence of demonstrable polytypic variation in a species which has always been considered to show no variation at all. The pattern of the geographical variation in *P. spilonotus* is precisely similar to many other species whose races have comparable ranges in south-eastern Africa.

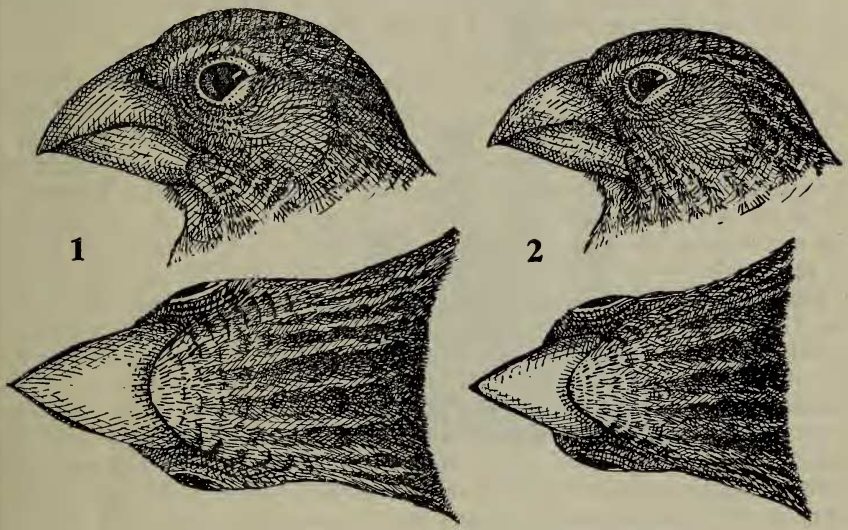
With the description of this new race, the range of the nominate subspecies can be defined as follows: the eastern Cape Province from about Port Elizabeth to Pondoland, mainly in the coastal districts, and in Natal and southern Zululand.

Amblyospiza albifrons woltersi, subsp. nov.

Type: ♀ adult. Manhiça, Sul do Save, southern Mozambique. 27th September, 1955. Collected by P. A. Clancey. In the collection of the Durban Museum.

Diagnosis: The adult ♀ differs from that of *A. a. albifrons* (Vigors), 1831: Algoa Bay, Cape Province, in being paler on the upper-parts and less heavily striated ventrally. In size very much smaller, thus—wings (flattened) of 4 ♀♀ 83—86.5 (85.0) as against 90.5—96 (92.8) mm. in a series of *A. a. albifrons* from the eastern Cape and Natal, tails 59—61.5 (60.6) and 66—70 (68.0) mm. respectively. The bill is also much less massive (see figures). The characters of the adult ♂ are unknown, but are presumably similar to those of the adult ♂ of *A. a. unicolor*. Compared with *A. a. unicolor* (Fischer and Reichenow), 1878: Zanzibar, the ♀ of *A. a. woltersi* is similar in size, but differs in being paler and less uniform

dark rusty brown on the upper-parts, and in having the ground colour of the ventral surface white, with no buffish wash. The ear-coverts are also less dark and rusty, as are the wings and tail. *A. a. montana* van Someren, 1921: Fort Hall, Kenya Colony, resembles *A. a. unicolor* but the ♂ is larger and the ♀ still darker on the upper parts and more strongly tinged with buff ventrally. *A. a. maxima* Roberts, 1932: Kasane, Chobe River, of northern Bechuanaland and Barotseland (western Northern Rhodesia), is larger than the nominate race and the ♂ is blacker below.



Amblyospiza albifrons (Vigors)

Figures of female specimens showing the marked size difference in the bills of two races of *A. albifrons* occurring in south-eastern Africa.

1. *A. a. albifrons* 2. *A. a. woltersi*

Measurements of the Type: Wing (flattened) 84.5, culmen 19.5, tarsus 22, tail 59 mm.

Range: Southern Mozambique and adjacent eastern Southern Rhodesia. Northern limits not yet known.

Material: *A. a. woltersi*, 7. *A. a. albifrons*, 34 (eastern Cape Province 9; Natal 20; north-eastern Zululand 1; Transvaal 2; extreme southern Mozambique 2). *A. a. unicolor*, 10. *A. a. montana*, 2. *A. a. maxima*, 6.

Remarks: At Vila Luiza, just north of Lourenço Marques, we collected two specimens which can be placed as the nominate race, their proportions being large and in agreement with my material from the eastern Cape Province and Natal, though the ♀ is paler dorsally. Further north, at Manhiça, which is also on the banks of the Incomati River, we found only the small *A. a. woltersi*, which was in flocks in native cultivations, consorting with *Euplectes albonotata* and *Passer griseus*. From these observations, and also on the basis of the material in the collection of the Museum Dr. Alvaro de Castro, it would appear that two quite discrete

races of this weaver occur in southern Mozambique. The precise range limits of *A. a. woltersi* are not known, but it presumably enjoys a wide distribution in the low, hot coastlands of Mozambique. Like the contiguous form, *A. a. unicolor*, *A. a. woltersi* is small and relatively weak-billed, and the two races almost certainly meet in the lower Zambesi area, as *A. a. unicolor* is found as far south as southern Nyasaland, specimens in the Transvaal Museum collection from Mpimbi, Nyambadwe (Blantyre), Chinteche and Chikwawa being referable to it. Benson, "Check List of the Birds of Nyasaland," 1953, p. 76, places Nyasa birds as nominate *A. albifrons*, but the accuracy of this finding is not borne out by a study of several specimens of Benson's own collecting.

Most recent standard works on Ethiopian birds (*vide* Chapin, "Birds of the Belgian Congo," part iv, 1954, pp. 298–299; Mackworth-Praed and Grant, "Birds of Eastern and North Eastern Africa," vol. ii, 1955, pp. 939–940, etc.) give nominate *A. albifrons* as ranging from the southern Congo and southern Tanganyika Territory to the eastern Cape Province. Owing to lack of material from many important areas it is not possible for me to revise the several races which actually occur in the austral parts of the species' wide continental range, but I can state that *A. a. albifrons* is limited in its distribution to the eastern Cape Province, Natal, Zululand, the Transvaal and extreme southern Mozambique. In this race, and the closely allied *A. a. maxima*, the bill reaches its most massive proportions, but the wing length, though large, is equalled by other races, *e.g.*, *A. a. montana*, *A. a. melanota*, etc. These marked differences in the bill-size between some of the races suggest the existence of local differences in feeding habits. The nominate race spends most of its time in forests, feeding on the hard-stoned fruits of forest trees, and the birds only leave such an environment in the breeding season, when they resort to reed-beds for nesting purposes. As already noted above, we collected our non-breeding *A. a. woltersi* in cultivation and not forest, which indicates that differences in food preference and feeding habits exist between these two southern races of this weaver, and are, perhaps, responsible for the salient variation in bill-size.

Text Figures

This new race of *A. albifrons* is named for Herr H. E. Wolters, the well-known German systematist, in recognition of his services to our understanding of the African Ploceidae.

On the Systematic Position of the Yellow Bunting, *Emberiza citrinella* Linnaeus in Hungary

by Dr. L. Horváth and Dr. A. Keve

Received 25th February, 1956

I. *Introduction.* The Yellow Bunting, *Emberiza citrinella* Linnaeus, is a very common bird in Hungary and is to be found in all suitable biotops throughout the country. The great individual variation both in colour and size stimulated the authorities of the National Museum to collect a large series of this interesting species. They were collected in the